

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04  
NSAE-00 SIL-01 /031 W  
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R 241915Z JAN 77  
FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7445  
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAO PAULO 0170

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: ELAB BR  
SUBJ: NARROWLY AVERTED WILDCAT STRIKE BY SAO PAULO BUS DRIVERS  
ALARMS AUTHORITIES

REF: MACK MEMCON OC OCT 7, 1975 ENTILED COMMUNIST PENETRATION  
OF ONE SAO PAULO UNION, AN INSIDE VIEW

1. SUMMARY: VIGOROUS PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES AND THREATS OF RETALIATION BY THE AUTHORITIES NARROWLY AVERTED AN ILLEGAL WILDCAT STRIKE SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 19 AND 20 BY AS MANY AS 10,000 PRIVATE SAO PAULO BUS COMPANY DRIVERS. THE ATTEMPTED WALKOUT, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN THE CITY'S FIRST MAJOR ILLEGAL STRIKE IN YEARS, WAS INSTIGATED BY THE CLANDESTINE "UNIAO DE MOTORISTAS" TO DEMAND HIGHER WAGES AND BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS. ALTHOUGH THE LEADERS OF THE STRIKE MOVEMENT REMAINED ANONYMOUS, SAO PAULO TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION (SPTF) PRESIDENT AFONSO TEIXEIRA IDENTIFIED THEM TO A CONGEN OFFICER AS THREE FORMER DIRECTORS OF THE SAO PAULO BUS AND TRUCK DRIVERS UNION (SPBU), WHOSE ALLEGED COMMUNIST PARTY (PCB) TIES PRECIPITATED GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION OF THE UNION IN SEPT 1975 THAT CONTINUES TO THIS DAY. APPARENTLY THE STATE DOEPS HAS ARRESTED THE THREE, BUT THEIR DETENTION HAS BEEN MADE PUBLIC.

2. THE GOVERNMENT MUST HAVE BEEN DEEPLY DISTURBED BY THE  
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ABILITY OF A SMALL GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS ACTING SECRETLY TO MANIPULATE THOUSANDS OF WORKERS TO A BRINK OF A MAJOR TRANSPORT STRIKE WHICH BY DEFINITION IS ILLEGAL IN BRAZIL. SUSPICION APPARENTLY EXISTS THAT THE ABORTIVE WALKOUT REPRESENTED THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT MANIFESTATION OF PCB EFFORTS TO DEVELOP IN BRAZIL SPANISH STYLE "SINDICATOS CLANDESTINOS" WHICH WOULD EXIST ALONG SIDE THE LEGALLY RECOGNIZED GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED UNIONS, EXERCISING DE

FACTO CONTROL OVER THE WORKERS. IF THIS THESIS IS VALID, THE PARTY CHOSE ITS TARGET WELL. IN ADDITION TO MANY LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES RECOGNIZED BY ALL PARTIES INVOLVED THAT THEIR DISCREDITED INTERVENED UNION HAS BEEN POWERLESS TO RESOLVE, THE BUS DRIVERS HOLD THE POTENTIAL TO CLOSE DOWN THE CITY. BUT EVEN IF THESE FEARS OF A WIDER COMMUNIST SCHEME ARE EXAGGERATED, AND THEY PROBABLY ARE FOR THE MOMENT, THE BUS DRIVERS PLIGHT ALONE, IF UNATTENDED, COULD PRODUCE FUTURE HEADACHES FOR THE GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

3. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, UNSIGNED, MIMEOGRAPHED LEAFLETS ISSUED IN THE NAME OF THE CLANDESTINE "UNIAO DE MOTORISTAS" HAVE BEEN CIRCULATED AMONG THE GARAGES OF THE 68 PRIVATE BUS FIRMS, WHICH TRANSPORT 80 PCNT OF GREATER SAO PAULO'S BUS PASSENGERS, EXHORTING DRIVERS, TICKETTAKERS (COBRADORES) AND MECHANICS TO STRIKE JANUARY 19 AND 20 IN DEFENSE OF HIGHER WAGES, FEWER HOURS AND BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS. SPECIFICALLY, THE "UNIAO" DEMANDED A MINIMUM HOURLY SALARY OF CR\$13 FOR DRIVERS AND MECHANICS (ABOUT DOUBLE THEIR CURRENT RATE), CR\$8 FOR TICKET TAKERS AND IMMEDIATE ELECTIONS FOR NEW LEADERS OF THE SAO PAULO BUS AND TRUCK DRIVERS UNION (SPBU), WHICH REMAINS UNDER GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION DESPITE THE LABOR MINISTER'S PLEDGE TO END IT.

4. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT PRIVATE BUS COMPANY DRIVERS GET THE SHORT END OF THE STICK. THEIR FINANCIALLY HARD PRESSED EMPLOYERS NOT ONLY OPERATE WITHOUT THE SUBSIDIES ENJOYED BY THE MUNICIPAL BUS COMPANY (CMTC), BUT, IN ADDITION, MUST COMPENSATE THE CMTC FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK THE NUMEROUS ROUTES THE CMTC CONTROLS BUT IS UNABLE TO SERVICE. AS A RESULT, PRIVATE COMPANY

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DRIVERS' SALARIES ARE BARELY TWO-THIRDS THE CMTC LEVEL. MORE-OVER, THEIR BUSES ARE KEPT IN DEPLORABLE CONDITION, POSING A CONSTANT THREAT TO THE SAFETY OF THE DRIVERS AND THE PUBLIC. PRINCIPALLY TO MAKE ENDS MEET, BUT ALSO BECAUSE THE PRIVATE COMPANIES CANNOT ATTRACT SUFFICIENT HELP AT THE WAGES THEY OFFER, THE DRIVERS ARE OBLIGED REGULARLY TO WORK GRUELING AND DANGEROUS 12-14 HOUR DAYS. THIS IS OF COURSE A VIOLATION OF THE NATION'S LABOR CODE WHICH ESTABLISHES 10 HOURS AS THE DAILY MAXIMUM, INCLUDING OVERTIME.

5. IN SUM, THE BUS DRIVERS' PLIGHT WAS RIPE FOR EXPLOITATION. AT FIRST GLANCE IT APPEARS THAT ASIDE FROM SPREADING THE LEAFLETS, THE "UNIAO DE MOTORISTAS" ENGAGED IN LITTLE OR NO DIRECT STRIKE AGITATION, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN RISKY IN ANY EVENT. NONETHELESS, WORD OF THE STRIKE APPEAL SPREAD QUICKLY AMONG THE DRIVERS. ACCORDING TO SOME PRESS REPORTS, THE MAJORITY ENDORSED IT WITH AN ALMOST LIGHT HEARTED "NOTHING TO LOSE" ATTITUDE.

6. AS SENTIMENT IN FAVOR OF THE WALKOUT INCREASED, THE ALARMED

AUTHORITIES INSTITUTED VIGOROUS MEASURES TO HEAD IT OFF, OR, AT WORST, TO MITIGATE ITS IMPACT. IN THE DAYS PRIOR TO THE STRIKE DATE, THE REGIONAL LABOR DELEGATE REPEATEDLY WARNED DRIVERS THAT THOSE WHO TOOK PART WOULD BE PROSECUTED UNDER THE NATIONAL SECURITY LAWS. TO BACK UP HIS ADMONITION, STATE DOEPS AGENTS, WHO WERE ON ALERT THROUGHOUT THE CRISIS, AS WELL AS STATE MILITARY POLICE WERE DISPATCHED TO ALL BUS GARAGES IN THE CITY IN THE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING OF THE PLANNED WALKOUT. THEIR MISSION WAS TO MAINTAIN ORDER AND "TAKE ATTENDANCE". IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT ABSENTEES WOULD BE REQUIRED TO EXPLAIN THEMSELVES LATER.

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7. OTHER MEASURES WERE TAKEN AS WELL. TO AVOID POSSIBLE ASSAULTS BY STRIKERS AGAINST NON-STRIKERS ON THEIR WAY TO WORK, DRIVERS TOLD TO REPORT IN REGULAR STREET CLOTHES RATHER THAN THEIR CUSTOMARY UNIFORMS. AS A FURTHER PRECAUTION, THE CMTC PREPARED TO PRESS ADDITIONAL BUSES INTO SERVICE TO COVER SOME OF THE PRIVATE ROUTES THAT MIGHT BE AFFECTED BY THE STRIKE. SAO PAULO TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION LEADERS WERE ALSO SENT OUT TO PERSUADE THE WOULD-BE STRIKERS OF THE FUTILITY OF THEIR PROPOSED ACT.

8. IN THE END, THE GOVERNMENT'S COMBINATION OF PRECAUTIONS AND SHOW OF FORCE PREVAILED. ALMOST ALL OF THE LARGE NUMBERS OF DRIVERS AND OTHER WORKERS WHO HAD GATHERED IN THE SMALL BARS AROUND THE GARAGES TO SEE WHAT THEIR COMRADES WOULD DO DECIDED IN THE END TO WORK. NO VIOLENCE WAS REPORTED. ONLY SEVEN DRIVERS WHO WERE CAUGHT EXHORTING THEIR COMRADES TO STRIKE WERE ARRESTED BY DOEPS AGENTS, AND THESE AFTER INTERROGATION WERE RELEASED SOON AFTER. WHILE THE ABSENTEE RATE AMONG DRIVERS AVERAGED AN UNUSUALLY HIGH 20 PCNT CITY WIDE ON THE FIRST DAY, MOST ATTRIBUTED THIS FIGURE TO HEAVY FLOODING WHICH ISOLATED MANY PARTS OF THE CITY. ON THE

SECOND DAY, ATTENDANCE WAS BACK TO NORMAL.

9. THUS FAR THE AUTHORITIES HAVE ABSTAINED FROM MAKING PUBLIC THE NAMES OF THOSE THEY BELIEVE RESPONSIBLE FOR INSTIGATING THE ABORTIVE WALKOUT. HOWEVER, IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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A CONGEN OFFICER, SAO PAULO TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION (SPTF) PRESIDENT AFONSO TEIXEIRA IDENTIFIED THEM AS THREE FORMER LEADERS OF THE SAO PAULO BUS AND TRUCK DRIVERS UNION (SPBU), INCLUDING ITS FORMER PRESIDENT ALCIDIO BOANO. BOANO WAS AMONG THE APPROXIMATELY EIGHT DIRECTORS AND LAWYERS FROM THE SPBU ARRESTED BY GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES IN JANUARY 1975 AND CHARGED WITH DIVERTING UNION FUNDS INTO THE COFFERS OF THE PCB. THE SPBU ARRESTS WERE LINKED TO A GENERAL GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION INTO PCB ACTIVITIES AT THE TIME STEMMING FROM THE UNCOVERING OF A CLANDESTINE PCB PRINTING PRESS NEAR SAO PAULO. ALTHOUGH BOANO AND MOST OF HIS COHORTS WERE ACQUITTED FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE THEN AVAILABLE AND RELEASED IN JULY OF THAT YEAR, STRONG SUSPICION OF HIS PCB TIES REMAINED. CONSEQUENTLY HIS SUBSEQUENT EFFORTS TO RESUME CONTROL OF HIS UNION IN SEPTEMBER 1975 PRECIPITATED THE GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION THAT CONTINUES TO THIS DAY.

10. THE LOCAL SECURITY ORGANS APPARENTLY SHARE TEIXEIRA'S SUSPICIONS ABOUT BOANO'S COMPLICITY IN THE STRIKE ATTEMPT. ACCORDING TO THE SPTF PRESIDENT, BOANO AND HIS TWO COMRADES WERE ARRESTED ON THE EVE OF THE PLANNED WALKOUT. THEIR DETENTION HAS NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC, HOWEVER.

11. THE AUTHORITIES WERE OBVIOUSLY SHAKEN BY THE NEAR SUCCESS OF THE STRIKE WHICH WOULD HAVE PARALYZED THE CITY. THERE IS EVIDENTLY SOME CONCERN THAT THE WALKOUT MIGHT NOT BE JUST AN ISOLATED OCCURRENCE, BUT RATHER THE FIRST SIGN OF A PCB EFFORT TO DEVELOP IN BRAZIL SPANISH STYLE "SINDICATOS CLANDESTINOS." THESE SHADOWY ORGANIZATIONS WOULD PRESUMABLY EXIST ALONG SIDE THE LEGALLY RECOGNIZED AND OFTEN DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT DOMINATED UNIONS AND EXERCISE DE FACTO CONTROL OVER THE WORKERS. THE SPTF PRESIDENT, WHO HAS BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE SECURITY AUTHORITIES, DESCRIBED THE BUS DRIVERS STRIKE ATTEMPT AS A "TRIAL BALLOON" BY THE PCB TO BE EMULATED IN OTHER LABOR SECTORS. IF HIS THESIS IS CORRECT, THE PARTY CHOSE ITS FIRST TARGET WELL, AND IS UNDOUBTEDLY ENCOURAGED BY THE RESULTS. OMINOUSLY, OTHER SAO PAULO WORKERS, WHILE LESS PRIVILEGED IN TERMS OF

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ECONOMIC LEVERAGE, SHARE THE BUS DRIVERS' DISTRESS DURING THIS

PERIOD OF AUSTERITY AND DECLINING LIVING STANDARDS THAT MIGHT BE  
RIPE FOR EXPLOITATION BY THE PCB OR OTHER LEFTISTS.

12. VIEWED MORE CALMLY, HOWEVER, FEARS OF A BROADER PCB  
THREAT TO THE LABOR MOVEMENT PROBABLY ARE UNJUSTIFIED, AT LEAST FOR  
THE MOMENT. ALTHOUGH COMMUNIST ACTIVISTS ARE PRESENT  
AMONG OTHER UNION GROUPS, AND IN YEARS PAST HAVE WIELDED CONSIDERABLE  
INFLUENCE, REPEATED CULLINGS BY SECURITY FORCES HAVE TAKEN THEIR TOLL  
.

13. THE AUTHORITIES SHOULD TAKE LITTLE COMFORT IN THIS FACT, HOWEVER.  
EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF AGITATION BY SUBVERSIVES, THE BUS  
DRIVERS' GRIEVANCES ALONE IF UNRESOLVED WILL LIKELY REMAIN THE  
SOURCE OF CONTINUED DIFFICULTIES. THE STRIKE ATTEMPT HAS SERVED  
TO RAISE THE CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE DRIVERS TO THE POINT WHERE  
SPONTANEOUS AND UNDIRECTED WALKOUTS COULD OCCUR IN THE FUTURE.

14. PERHAPS MOST ILLUSTRATIVE OF A NEW MOOD OF MILITANCE AMONG  
THE BUS DRIVERS STEMMING FROM THE STRIKE ATTEMPT IS THE REFRESHED  
ACTIVIST SPIRIT OF SPTF PRESIDENT AND REGIONAL LABOR COURT  
MAGISTRATE AFONSO TEIXEIRA. LONG CONSIDERED A PARADIGM OF  
ESTABLISHMENT LABOR LEADERS IN SAO PAULO, TEIXEIRA WAS DIRECTLY  
INVOLVED IN TRYING TO HEAD OFF THE STRIKE. HE NONETHELESS ADMITS  
DERIVING GREAT SATISFACTION FROM SEEING THAT THE DRIVERS ARE STILL  
CAPABLE OF UNITING FOR A WALKOUT AFTER 12 YEARS OF TIGHT GOVERNMENT  
RESTRAINT. HE BOASTED, PROBABLY WITH SOME JUSTIFICATION, THAT  
HAD HE BEEN IRRESPONSIBLE AND WILLING TO RISK HIS OWN NECK, HE  
COULD HAVE BROUGHT OFF THE STRIKE CLOSING DOWN THE CITY --EVEN IN  
THE FACE OF GOVERNMENT THREATS--SIMPLY BY PASSING THE WORD  
THAT HE FAVORED IT. IN AN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY AUDACIOUS MOVE,  
TEIXEIRA HAS JUST FIRED OFF A COMMUNICATION TO THE LABOR MINISTER  
IMPLICITLY WARNING HIM THAT THE STRIKE WAS AVERTED THIS TIME  
THANKS TO HIS FEDERATION'S COOPERATION WITH THE AUTHORITIES. IT WAS  
NOW UP TO THE MINISTER TO ACHIEVE A LASTING SOLUTION TO THE  
BUS DRIVERS' PROBLEM BY MOBILIZING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT BEHIND  
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A BILL PRESENTLY BEFORE THE CONGRESS TO ESTABLISH THE BASIC  
WAGE FOR BUS DRIVERS AT FOUR MINIMUM SALARIES.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** NARROWLY AVERTED WILDCAT STRIKE BY SAO PAULO BUS DRIVERS ALARMS AUTHORITIES  
**TAGS:** ELAB, BR  
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**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/56172bd2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
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